

## Safety Conscious Planning (SCP)

### **Problem: Traffic Crashes are One of the Leading Causes of Death in the United States**

Traffic crashes result in over 42,000 fatalities per year, almost 3 million injuries, and a cost to the nation of \$230 billion. While much progress has been made in reducing the rate of fatalities, national statistics indicate a current fatality rate of 1.5 per 100 million vehicle miles traveled. The goal established by FHWA is to reduce this rate to 1.0 per 100 million vehicle miles traveled by the year 2008. Safety Conscious Planning is one strategy for achieving this goal of improved safety.

#### **Putting it in Perspective:**

- TEA-21 included the safety planning requirement that each statewide and metropolitan planning process shall provide for consideration of projects and strategies that will increase the safety and security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.
- To successfully move forward, practical examples of how safety can be fully integrated with the transportation planning process are now needed.

### **Solution: Better Integrate Safety Considerations in the Transportation Planning Process**

Safety Conscious Planning (SCP) is a comprehensive, system wide, multimodal, proactive process that better integrates safety into surface transportation decision-making. Safety Conscious Planning is achieved when:

1. All planning organizations routinely consider safety as an explicit planning priority that is integrated into all elements of project development and selection.
2. All planning organizations (public and private sector) have:
  - Practitioners trained in state-of-the-art safety techniques; and
  - Access to state-of-the-art safety planning tools.

3. Decision-makers are informed about the quantitative safety implications of all planning decisions, and they are reflected in decision-making.

Those responsible for SCP include transportation planners in all modes and at all levels along with representatives from transit agencies, highway and motor carrier safety agencies, development and land use organizations and political decision makers and the public.

A collaborative effort is needed among the partners that can affect changes in safety. Bringing these diverse players together to explore the safety issue can be a key part of the problem solving process. Among the issues that may result from this examination are:

1. *Data* – quality, timeliness and application in identifying problems and evaluating countermeasures.
2. *Jurisdictional partnerships* – local, State and Federal partners need to recognize and support each other's role in the process.
3. *Aging population* – safety impacts may become more significant as the population of older drivers increases.

The FHWA Office of Planning, Environment, and Realty supports a website on Safety Conscious Planning (<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/scp>) that provides resources that can be used to better integrate safety into the planning process. FHWA also facilitates State Safety Forums that bring together the many groups involved in addressing safety to develop action plans for moving forward. FHWA has also supported National Safety Conscious Planning Leadership Conferences to advance the implementation of this approach to improving safety. In addition, a new Safety Conscious Planning course, jointly developed by FHWA and Federal Transit Administration, is now available through the National Highway Institute and National Transit Institute.

The FHWA Resource Center provides training and technical assistance to agencies that want to advance Safety Conscious Planning in their communities. In support of FHWA initiatives, Resource Center staff coordinate with Headquarters and Division Office staff to develop and provide assistance to agencies on Safety Conscious Planning. This assistance can be directed at specific issues or a broader perspective on opportunities to incorporate safety considerations in the planning process. This effort promotes integration of safety into transportation planning by providing practical ideas and examples of where and how it has been done. In addition, the Resource Center Planning Team offers a seminar on Safety Conscious Planning, tailored to customer requirements and needs.

#### **Successful Applications: States' Results Demonstrate Success**

##### *Detroit Area MPO*

SEMCOG (Southeast Michigan Council of Governments) has long advocated for the incorporation of safety into the planning process. SEMCOG's philosophy is to provide data driven information and to educate the decision makers. SEMCOG provides a Traffic Safety Manual to local agencies to assist in their analysis of roadway related traffic safety problems. The manual provides a set of user friendly tools for checking a location's crash history, identifying possible crash causes and countermeasures and conducting a preliminary benefit/cost analysis of those countermeasures selected for further consideration. SEMCOG also prepares an annual statistical report on traffic crashes in southeast Michigan. This report is prepared as part of their Safety Management System and is designed to assist communities in understanding traffic safety issues. They have also conducted studies on special issues such as Red Light Running and Deer Crashes. Because of the planning process, SEMCOG has programmed and implemented safety projects using non-safety dedicated funds, integrated safety into the overall transportation program, increased the sensitivity of the public and media to safety issues, increased use of traffic and safety consultants and reversed an alarming trend toward increased crashes, fatalities and serious injuries.

##### *State Safety Forums - Iowa*

FHWA has facilitated State Safety Forums to bring together the diverse community involved in traffic safety to discuss strategies for sharing resources and working collaboratively to achieve safety goals. Each forum is tailored to the needs of the individual jurisdiction. Iowa convened their Safety Conscious Planning Forum in January 2003, with sponsorship from the Iowa Department of Transportation, the Governors Traffic Safety Bureau, and the FHWA. Participants in the forum came from IDOT safety and planning, Regional Planning

Organizations, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, Governors Traffic Safety Bureau, Department of Public Safety, and other local, State and Federal agencies. The group reviewed the safety situation in Iowa, learned what other organizations in Iowa were doing in safety planning, and heard how other areas of the country were addressing safety issues. The group then developed a list of initiatives that they committed to pursue to improve coordination among agencies and advance safety considerations. Safety Forums, like the one held in Iowa, have been held in eight other States since 2001.

#### **Benefits:**

The ultimate objective of effective Safety Conscious Planning is a reduction in crashes, injuries and fatalities. Achieving this goal requires a multi-pronged effort and relies upon a wide range of safety initiatives. The inclusion of safety as a key planning factor and a performance measure in all State DOT and MPO multimodal plans and programs is an important component of a broader transportation safety effort.

Integrating safety into the transportation planning process requires that State DOT and MPO transportation planners and transit operators coordinate with the established safety planning processes of the State highway and motor carrier safety agencies. This broader collaboration may yield additional benefits in program coordination and effectiveness.

#### **Additional Resources:**

FHWA's SCP website:

<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/scp>

FHWA's Safety website: <http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov>

NTI Safety Conscious Planning Course (new):

<http://www.ntionline.com>

NHI Highway Safety Courses (various):

<http://www.nhi.fhwa.dot.gov>

Safety Conscious Planning Seminar  
(contact Resource Center Planning Team)

#### **For more information, contact:**

**Jim Thorne, FHWA Resource Center**

**Phone: (708) 283-3538**

**E-mail: [jim.thorne@fhwa.dot.gov](mailto:jim.thorne@fhwa.dot.gov)**

**Roger Petzold, FHWA Office of Interstate and Border Planning**

**Phone: (202) 366-4074**

**E-mail: [roger.petzold@fhwa.dot.gov](mailto:roger.petzold@fhwa.dot.gov)**

**Aida Berkovitz, FHWA Resource Center**

**Phone: (415) 744-2614**

**E-mail: [aida.berkovitz@fhwa.dot.gov](mailto:aida.berkovitz@fhwa.dot.gov)**